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ABSTRACT

The implementation of multicultural teaching in Texas public schools was examined in 28 elementary, 18 junior high, and 17 high schools in southeastern Texas. Questionnaires, sent to 63 teachers enrolled in a graduate course in multicultural education, evaluated learning resources, curriculum development, school environments, and personnel development. All schools were found to have available, but underutilized, instructional materials; 46 schools offered no ethnic courses; most schools failed to use human resources in the community; little attention was given to holidays, events, or personalities of diverse groups; school assemblies, plays, and other activities did not reflect cultural or ethnic diversity; school administrators, counselors, teachers, and librarians were seen to play a vital role in the implementation of multicultural education, but more than two-thirds of the schools failed to provide inservice training to prepare staff to deal with local cultural groups. Recommendations included teacher training programs organized by local districts, increased use of library resources and subscriptions to ethnic magazines, curriculum committees on ethnic studies, use of culturally different resource people, and observation of ethnic festivities. A table reports raw scores of the 16 evaluation questions and the distribution of different responses. (LFL)

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Implementation of Multicultural Education in Texas Public Schools

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ABSTRACT

Multicultural teaching has been a trend in American education since the 1970s. In Texas, multicultural teaching and components have been emphasized by the Texas Education Agency since 1977. However, the relationship between the instruction of multicultural courses offered by Texas universities and the implementation of multicultural teaching in public schools deserve close examination.

In order to identify the differences between theory and reality, the researcher has examined the following areas of 63 selected schools as a preliminary step: learning resources, curriculum development, school environments and personnel development.

It was found that the execution of multicultural education depends on the commitment of school personnel, including administrators, counselors, classroom teachers and librarians. Learning resources are available to students but not fully utilized. The weakest area is curriculum development for multicultural components. Inservice workshops on multicultural education for educators are needed for better implementation.

Implementation of Multicultural Education in

Texas Public Schools

Multicultural teaching has become a trend in American education since the 1970's. Educators have gradually realized that the role of the school is not only to be responsible for transmitting the culture of the dominant society, but also to transmit the cultures possessed by diverse learners. As a result of the collective effort of leaders of various ethnic groups, public officials, politicians and concerned individuals, the Ethnic Heritage Studies Bill was passed as part of the education amendments of 1972. This legislation, which has been called the first official recognition by Congress of the diverse population of the United States, proposes that people living in a multiethnic society need to have a greater understanding of their own history as well as the history of others.

In the beginning, the bill proclaimed that the 1970's would be the long overdue decade of the ethnics. However, the movement gradually lost its momentum and has even been further downgraded since the beginning of 1980's due to the execution of block grants and more local control on financing for public education. Even without support from the federal government, the accreditation criteria for teacher education required by the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) has become the mainstay and vital incentive for these interested in higher education to continue the effort to promote ethnic awareness and

recognition.

The goals and scope of multicultural education presented by the NCATE are broad and general. Many educators in this area have a different focus and priority due to various interpretations of our social and political phenomenon (Baker, 1978; Banks, 1979; Brown, 1979; Grambs, 1979 and Grant, 1981). According to the standards adopted by NCATE (1977) teacher education curricula should include the following elements:

1) Promote analytical and evaluative abilities to confront issues such as participatory democracy, racism and sexism and the part of power.
2) Develop skills for values clarification including the study of the manifest and latent transmission of values;
3) Examine the dynamics of diverse cultures and the implications for developing teaching strategies;
4) Examine linguistic variations and diverse learning styles as a basis for the development of appropriate teaching strategies.

The primary challenge encountered by public school teachers in the 1980's is to preserve and enhance cultural pluralism in our free and democratic society. In other words, every learner is entitled to equal opportunity for an education which encompasses their cultural heritage (Brown, 1979 and Grambs, 1979). The goals and contents of multicultural education should be part of school curriculum and be consistant with the life

experience of each learner. The importance of multicultural teaching is clearly indicated by Ehlers (1983): "Acculturation is an inevitable process in the United States because the U.S. is a pluralistic society. Whether the melting of the assorted ethnic groups, societies, organizations, beliefs, or religions is hostile or peaceful, without destroying national unity, will be determined by the implementation of multicultural education in the schools." Thus, its main thrust is to introduce students to various segments and lifestyles of American society.

Unfortunately, school teachers often lack the knowledge of and sensitivity to other cultural groups and their heritages. They have vague ideas of human differences in race, class, sex, religion, etc. Consequently, they are not well-prepared for the ethnic reality in the classroom and frequently fail to respond to the needs of culturally different learners and to promote cultural and ethnic understanding among all students. Findings from the study conducted by Mahan and Lacefield (1982) point out that there is a market for multicultural training and experience and that graduates possessing them seem to have a distinct competitive edge with personnel administrators.

In addition to teacher qualifications, school policies in curriculum development, extracurricula and audio visual materials also present a great deal of concern to the implementation of multicultural education in schools. With the release of the report "A Nation at Risk" by the National Commission on Excellence in Education (1983) it is believed that schools will shift back

to the basics, and that the chances of offering multicultural studies from kindergarten to 12th grade will become less prevalent. Thus, individual schools will have to assume the mission of multicultural teachings. While many other states such as New York and California have a well defined scope and high quality curriculum for multicultural education to be implemented in public schools, the state of Texas still has a long way to go. In Texas, multicultural components have been emphasized by the Texas Education Agency since 1977. As a result, all certified teachers must have taken at least one course related to multicultural studies which is one of the criteria for accreditation for academic excellence set by NCATE as mentioned earlier. To comply with state and national requirements, the University of Houston-Clear Lake has offered several graduate and undergraduate courses related to multicultural studies during the past years, including a federally funded training project.

However, the discrepency between the instruction of multicultural courses offered by universities and the implementation of multicultural teaching in public schools is unclear and deserves a closer examination. It is important for teacher educators to acquire knowledge of what has been accomplished in multicultural education, what the needs and problems are and what a teacher education program can offer to meet the identified needs. Otherwise our preaching is merely confined to our own ivory tower without impact on the teaching field.

In order to better identify the differences between theory

and reality, this researcher has examined the following areas of 63 selected schools as a preliminary step: learning resources, curriculum development, school environments and personnel development.

METHOD

This survey was conducted in southeastern Texas. As the population of Texas grows, the ethnic and cultural composition of Texans has become more colorful than ever. For this study, 63 school teachers who, in a period of two years enrolled in a graduate course on multicultural education, were asked to conduct this survey in their respective schools. In order to insure the consistency of such an evaluation, they were also required to choose a partner in their school to conduct the same evaluation. The correlation of the total scores obtained by the paired teachers is .55 significant at .001 level.

Among the 63 schools surveyed there were 28 elementary, 18 junior high, and 17 senior high, all ranging in size from less than 500 students to over 2500 students and from two year old buildings to 35 year old buildings. Nearly three-fourths of the students in the participating schools were white (73.6%) while 88.2% of the teachers were white.

The instrument used for this study is adopted from James A. Banks' book (1979). It consists of 16 questions in the areas of learning resources, curriculum development, school environment

and personnel development. The sample was asked to evaluate schools based on all 16 items (Table I) with a rating scale of 0 to 5 points. They checked "NA" if the answer to the question was "not at all," "1" for "yes, but only a little," "5" if "yes, that aspect of the program is outstanding," "2" to "4" if the response was somewhere between the extremes. By adding the assigned points of each item, the total score was gathered to reflect the general quality of the participating schools. The maximum score of all 16 items is 80.

Each item in the questionnaire was first examined individually. The highest possible total score for each item was 315 based on the 63 responding schools. After the total score of each item was calculated, all 16 items were ranked according to their total scores (Table I). Furthermore, the six possible responses from "0" to "5" on each item were tallied in order to obtain a distribution of different responses.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

For discussion purposes, all 16 items were categorized into four areas as shown in Table I; four items are under the learning resources, five under curriculum development, six under school environment and one under personnel development. Table I indicates the raw scores of all items and their ranks.

TABLE I

Rank	Original Item No. and Statement	Total Score Received From All Samples	Distribution of Different Responses "0"	"1"	"2"	"3"	"4"	"5"
1	#5 Do the foods that are served in the school cafeteria reflect the ethnic diversity of American life?	183	2	11	11	17	11	11
2	#9 Does the school library include an ample number of books about American ethnic groups for all grade levels?	181	1	9	18	15	9	11
3	#16 Does the school district have an ample supply of films, filmstrips,	155	5	11	17	17	6	7

	records, and other media resources on American ethnic groups?							
4	#8 Does the school's professional library include books about American ethnic groups and ways to teach about them?	126	12	10	20	8	5	6
5	#3 Are there pictures of minority groups in the classrooms and in the halls of the schools?	125	9	20	13	9	6	4
6	#1 Is information about American ethnic groups included in all of the courses in the school, including the social studies,	123	8	16	17	17	3	1

	English, literature, physical education, home economics and science?							
7	#15 Do bulletin boards and other displays in the school reflect the ethnic diversity of American life? If so, in what ways?	119	11	21	10	9	9	3
8	#4 Do the calendars in the school include information about ethnic holidays and outstanding Americans of ethnic origin?	105	18	18	7	8	6	5
9	#6 Do school assemblies and plays reflect the ethnic diversity of American life?	101	16	20	12	9	1	5

10	#2 Is there a procedure for evaluating the treatment of ethnic groups in textbooks before they are adopted for use in the school?	100	21	15	8	11	3	5
11	#10 Does the school library subscribe to ethnic magazines such as Ebony, Indian Historian, Amerasia Journal, and El Grito?	89	25	18	6	6	8	2
12	Are individuals from the various ethnic organization within the community or in nearby communities frequently invited to speak to classes?	83	19	26	4	6	5	2
13	#7 Are the	71	23	19	16	2	1	2

	teachers and administrators provided in-service workshops and activities where they can acquire comment about Ameican ethnic cultures and ways to teach about them?							
14	#14 Do school holidays and celebrations reflect the ethnic diversity of American life?	56	34	0	5	5	0	1
15	#11 Is there, or has there been, a curriculum committee created to devise ways to integrate the entire school curriculum with ethnic content?	43	41	8	5	5	0	1

16	#13 Does the school offer elective courses in ethnic studies?	33	46	9	3	2	1	1

Learning Resources

Overall, this area has been largely achieved by the participating schools. Only one school was considered to have inadequate books on ethnic groups at all levels (Item #9). But in terms of the use of these books (Item #8) there is an inconsistency between item #8 and #9. This finding implies that teachers and/or libraians either lack the competency or the interest to fully use the available materials. It is indeed possible that these valuable materials are simply ignored on shelves or sitting in storage. Although books and AV materials on different ethnic groups are available to teachers as well as libraians, few seem to subscribe to ethnic magazines. It is possible that school libraians and/or administrators are not familiar with the available magazine publications on diverse cultural groups in the U.S. Perhaps such a shortage of learning resources relates to curriculum design and development which is quite weak as evaluated by the questionnaire.

Curriculum Development

Curriculum is more than course content; it also involves methodology and classroom organizaton (Shiman, 1981). The design and development of curriculum have a great impact on school academic programs and course contents taught in school. The term "curriculum development" referred to here is limited to the ethnic contents of various subjects, textbook adoption and

emphasis on ethnic studies by the curriculum committee. Item #13 receives the lowest score among all 16 items; 46 of these 63 schools examined offered no ethnic courses at all. There are two possible reasons contributing to this result. First, elective courses are only available in high schools which only represent less than one third of the sample. Second, Texas could be influenced less than other states by the trend of multicultural education that emerged in the 70's. Thus, a subject on ethnic studies is unlikely for the majority. With such a lack of enthusiasm toward multicultural education, curriculum committees committed to ethnic contents are not prevalent among the schools surveyed; 41 of these schools had no such committee at all and only five were rated "3."

Meanwhile, most schools fail to fully use the human resources in the community (item #12 in Table I). More than two-thirds of the schools (45) were rated either "0" or"1." Actually this is not a time-consuming or expensive policy and can benefit both teachers and students with a variety of cultural backgrounds. Evidently many schools have failed to take advantage of the rich human resources which become more diverse as a result of the continued influx of immigrants from foreign countries. Through the solicitated cultural sharing of new immigrants, schools can become a desirable place for multicultural learning.

School Environment

There are six items related to this category which reflect the overall learning environment in schools (Table I).

Among all the items, the item on food (#5) was rated highest; only two schools reported serving no ethnic food at all. It is particularly popular to serve Mexican food in Texas with Italian dishes running a close second. Very often the type of ethnic food served in school cafeterias is limited by the cooking skills of the cook and/or the available ingredients.

The next high ranked item in this category is the display of pictures of minority groups. Nearly half (29) of the schools studied were rated "0" and "1." Two predominately black schools were reported to have no pictures of white people or other racial groups showing ethnocentrism. Multicultural education should be free of ethnocentrism.

Another means of public display in schools is bulletin boards in both hallways and classrooms. Unfortuntely, more than half of the sample (32) revealed that very little was done in this respect. Only three schools were considered outstanding.

Although a calendar is not as broad as a bulletin board, they can both be syncronized and reinforce each other towards the same instructional goals. Teachers could use calendars to teach math and science concepts, as well as reading and English related to various ethnic festivities. But over half (36) of the sample wee rated "0" and "3."

Like the three preceding items, school assemblies and plays do not reflect the ethnic composition of our nation as found by this study. Again, over half (36) of the sample were rated "0" and "1." On the average, over one-fourth (26.4%) of the students

in the participating schools represented ethnic groups other than white. It is the responsibility of school personel to insure that these minority groups are adequately portrayed and represented in assemblies and plays as well as on bulletin boards and calendars.

It is interesting to note that more than half (34) of the schools evaluated have no holiday celebrations at all that reflect the diverse ethnic groups in the U.S. None of the schools were rated outstanding while only three rated "4." It is believed that if bulletin boards, calendars and school assemblies would reflect the cultural diversity in the U.S. the holidays of different ethnic and cultural groups would also receive attention and be observed by schools.

Personnel Development

It seems that the above results are quite discouraging. Nevertheless, it comes as no surprise when we examine the root of the problem--school personnel. There is no doubt that school administrators, counselors, classroom teachers and libraians all play a vital role in the implementation of multicultural education. It can be effectively and quickly implemented if the school personnel are well trained and share the same philosophy of and commitment to multicultural education. Although multi-cultural education is a required course for teacher certification in Texas, many techers still lack the opportunity to practice what they have learned in college and to keep abreast of new developments in the field. For instance, the changing

composition of the newly arrived immigrants has become a challenge to many teachers who are not prepared with adequate knowledge and skills to deal with certain cultural groups. When we rely on qualified school personnel as the key to the problem we found that more than two-thirds (42) of the schools have made very little or no effort in providing inservice workshops for administrators and teachers. Without such endeavor one cannot expect to see any improvement on the previously discussed deficiencies: subscriptions to ethnic magazines, curriculum development, textbook adoption, and other learning activities.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The implementation of multicultural education cannot be accomplished overnight. It consists of many areas such as school structure, educational programs, curriculum design and cognitive and affective development of teachers. All of these areas take time to make covert changes. For example, it is impossible to immediately recruit the number of minority teachers it would take to match the ethnic composition of the student body. A well-trained and qualified teacher cannot be produced instantly. Again, based on several studies, the impact of multicultural education on changing the attitude of teachers was not significant if they were merely required to attend either a short training session or a semester-long course (Grant, 1981 and Washington, 1981).

However, based on the above findings and discussion, it is evident that the execution of multicultural education depends on the commitment of school personnel, including administrators, counselors, classroom teachers and libraians. The role and responsibilities of school personnel have changed dramatically as a result of the growth and development of our nation and the interdependence of world nations. Schools should foster diversity rather than expecting all students to accept one way of doing things, and be effective in transmitting the cultures of all learners (Baker, 1978). School personnel need to understand and recognize the needs of multicultural education and have the knowledge and skills to implement it in every respect of the students' learning, both in cognitive and affective domains. Unfortunately, more than one-third of the schools studied (23) do not have inservice workshops on multicultural education for teachers and only five schools were rated from "3" to "5." Obviously, the first step to remedy the problem is to promote teacher training programs either through formal univesity multicultural courses or informal inservice workshops--organized by local school districts. Once school personnel recognize the problems caused by the different cultural backgrounds of learners and are willing to face the challenge, the rest of the problems and weakness in using library resources, creating a curriculum committee on ethnic study, the use of culturally different resource people and the observation of ethnic festivities can all be resolved.

The demand for teacher training in multicultural education should be widely recognized and accepted by educators. In a culturally pluralistic society we educators as a whole should gain a better understanding of the cultural backgrounds of all learners and insure the full development of all individual children regardless of their racial, ethnic, religious or socio-economic background and their physical, mental and emotional conditon. In order to manifest and articulate multicultural education in every aspect educational journals need to publicize more articles on multicultural education. Only through cooperative effort can multicultural education be truly implemented in schools without destroying national unity.

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